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Warmaking and American Democracy: The Struggle over Military Strategy, 1700 to the Present

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Michael D. Pearlman

still a subject worth studying. Anyone interested in learning more about it will benefit from this work.

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Pearlman, Michael D. *Warmaking and American Democracy: The Struggle over Military Strategy, 1700 to the Present*. Lawrence: Univ. of Kansas, 1999. 393pp. $45

Warmaking—the pursuit of political objectives by military means—ineluctably involves trade-offs not only in determining appropriate goals but also in determining the means by which they may be best pursued. While recent military action in Kosovo highlights the truth of this statement, the struggle to achieve a coherent military policy is not simply a contemporary problem for this nation. In this work, Michael D. Pearlman, a historian and associate professor at the U.S. Army's Command and General Staff College, traces this problem from the pre-Revolutionary colonial wars through to the present, providing a comprehensive survey not only of America's wars but of the continual push and pull between the practitioners of military art and the politicians who direct them. In doing so, Pearlman demonstrates the difficulties faced by a pluralistic democracy in obtaining a consensus on either the most effective means for fighting a war or on justifiable ends of the wars being fought. While pursuing an explanation of the sources of these difficulties, he also illuminates a warmaking goal that is perhaps peculiar to America—that of fighting in order to banish doubts that a democracy can win its wars.

War, it should be remembered, has as its essential end the achievement of foreign-policy objectives; it is not simply about the practice of the military art. The connection between the ends and means is what we usually call strategy. Pearlman makes the case that American warfighting strategy is not and has never been determined in practice the way one might hope that it is in theory—through the seamless coordination of economic, political, moral, and military assets for the most efficient and effective accomplishment of the desired end. Rather, national strategy is the resultant of a competition between many actors in

both the government and the military.

Although his book is not, according to the author, a political, diplomatic, or military history per se, Pearlman casts a wide scholarly net and draws on resources from all three areas to demonstrate that the differing perspectives within and between these actors—political parties, congresses and presidents, legislators and bureaucrats, military people and civilians, and the various branches of the armed services—make the formation of a coherent national strategy enormously complex.

Although each of these three areas has been individually, in other works, thoroughly dissected and analyzed, individually they can shed only so much light on the whole of the problem. Pearlman recasts the historical inquiry by examining the interactions between these factors as the main determinants of the outcomes. Herein lies the work's primary contribution to the understanding of warmaking. Woven into the historical narrative, Pearlman's thesis is especially appropriate in explaining the American involvement in Korea and the progress of U.S. policy in Vietnam. The chapter on World War II is particularly effective. Even in a case where U.S. goals and strategies were seemingly clear and broadly supported by all the elements of the government and the American public, Pearlman demonstrates how intraservice and intergovernmental conflicts shaped not only the strategies applied to achieve victory but the very definition of victory itself.

The book does have two aspects that could be seen as shortcomings by some (others may in fact view them as assets). First, Pearlman assumes that his readers have a basic knowledge of American political, diplomatic, and military history; therefore, he wastes little ink providing that background. Those unsure of their history would be well advised to keep a general history text handy. Those whose grasp of the background is firmer will, however, appreciate Pearlman's focus on the subject at hand. Second, the author eschews the traditional academic footnote, an approach that preserves the flow of the narrative but may be an obstacle to those interested in doing further research. He more than compensates for this "shortcoming," however, by providing comprehensive bibliographic notes, as well as a detailed bibliographic essay. Additionally, the author offers to provide exact citations to those who request them.

The timeliness of this work can not be overlooked. It sheds light on the recent debates on the use of force in Kosovo, as well as on the general discussion about the effectiveness of the application of

military power in the pursuit of limited political goals, by opening up new avenues of understanding into the formation and execution of military policy. Written in a highly readable style that eschews both political science jargon and "military-speak," this work is a valuable addition to the bookshelf of anyone interested in seeing how strategy has been determined in the actual rather than the abstract/theoretical world. It is essential reading for those who would understand the *why* of military strategy as well as the what.

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Alberts, David S., John J. Garstka, and Frederick P. Stein. *Network Centric Warfare: Developing and Leveraging Information Superiority*. Washington, D.C.: C4ISR Cooperative Research Program, 1999. 256pp. (no price given)

This work is the latest attempt to illustrate the concept of network-centric warfare (NCW). According to the book's preface, its purpose is to "help prepare for the journey that will take us from an emerging concept to the fielding of real operational capability." Within that framework, two subsequent goals are defined: to articulate the nature of the characteristics of NCW, and to suggest a process for developing operational capabilities. Yet with these defined goals, it is less than clear what role this book is supposed to fill. It seems, ostensibly, to be a guidebook or textbook for further exploration into and definition of the NCW concept, but it may also have been meant as a reference book on the current state of thought and writing on this subject.

The essential message is that information technology allows for a better flow of information, which in turn enhances organizational and combat effectiveness. The book begins with a treatment of how information technology has enhanced business practices. Although imperfect in some areas, this is the best part of the work. However, in the sections that follow, which discuss military implications of information technology and network-centric warfare itself, the book begins to exhibit difficulties. This is both unfortunate and unexpected, given the collective experience of the authors. David S. Alberts is a Ph.D. with twenty-five years of defense experience; Frederick P. Stein is a retired Army colonel, with service in the Signal Corps; and John J. Garstka is a former Air Force officer and coauthor of the NCW concept with Vice Admiral Arthur Cebrowski, President of the Naval War College.

As it is, there are production flaws that stand in the way of